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Atlantic Abolition in the Borderlands: the interesting narrative of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua

Alexandra Bicknell
Western Michigan University, alex.c.bicknell@gmail.com

The Crossroads in Detroit: Abolitionist Networks and the Interesting Narrative of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua

Alex Bicknell

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Dr. Nathan L.M. Tabor, Dr. Sally Hadden, Dr. Joshua Koenig

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The Interesting Narrative of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua

In Detroit, Michigan, the Geo. E. Pomeroy & Co. published *An Interesting Narrative. Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua, a native of Zoogoo, in the interior of Africa (A Convert to Christianity,) with a Description of That Part of the World; including the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants* in 1854.[1] This essay explores the circumstances under which Baquaqua's pamphlet found publication and how that may have influenced the written narrative and its legacy. The United States District Court of Michigan authorized Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua as the sole author of the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua* that George Eltweed Pomeroy's company printed in an independent pamphlet.[2] While the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua* was legally owned by Baquaqua, Samuel Downing Moore was credited on the cover for, "writ[ing] and revis[ing]," the work. Baquaqua assumedly narrated his story for Moore to write down, and then presented the draft to Pomeroy who edited and published the final version. None of the three men this paper studies were raised in Michigan. Each found themselves in the area after pursuits of religious fulfillment, explorative travel, and entrepreneurship.

Evidence of religious conjunction, long-distance travel, and trade proliferated among the records of Samuel Moore and George E. Pomeroy. Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, however, and his story revealed that his experience pushed the boundaries of these processes to a nearly global scale. First, Baquaqua traveled extensively both before his enslavement and after his capture on

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[1] Mahommah G. Baquaqua, *An Interesting Narrative. Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua, a native of Zoogoo, in the interior of Africa (A Convert to Christianity,) with a Description of The Part of the World; including the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants* (Detroit: Geo. E. Pomeroy & Co, 1854), inside cover.
The title of Baquaqua's work will be referred to in this paper as the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua.*

[2] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, inside cover.
And Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy eds., *The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage to Freedom in Africa and America* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 88.

the coast of the Gulf of Guinea in the modern Republique of Bénin.[3] Secondly, Baquaqua underwent several religious conversions of his own and mingled with people of differing religious backgrounds throughout his lifetime. Ultimately, Baquaqua finished his writing with the help of Pomeroy, a Presbyterian, and Moore, a Unitarian, even though Baquaqua was not affiliated with either of these denominations. Finally, Baquaqua gained enterprising experience raising funds with the American Baptist Free Mission (hereafter "the Free Mission") that he later applied to his life without them.[4] It was because of Baquaqua's learned experiences and perseverance that he was able to publish his biography even after the Free Mission was no longer invested in the project.

In 1854, Baquaqua traveled to Michigan, where he likely met separately with Samuel Moore and George Pomeroy.[5] Pomeroy was not identified as an abolitionist in any of the records this essay addresses. Pomeroy was a businessman from New York. He founded an express mail service that became the first to use the postage stamp; his successors would ultimately transform the Pomeroy Express Co. into Wells Fargo. When business appeared to be at its height, having just expanded into new territory in Ohio, Pomeroy sold off his share to move to Michigan. None of the publications about Pomeroy identify why he moved to Michigan. There, he established several businesses, though none of them were directly affiliated with the express empire he had left behind in New York. Pomeroy's financial decisions made him appear mysterious, likely the record was intentionally left incomplete. Atlantic Historians Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy, who authored the seminal work on the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, did not detail the

[3] Chattel slavery refers to slavery in the Americas that legally regarded people as property. Black slaves in the Americas were bound for life, generationally, equating their existence to inanimate objects to be bought and sold. See Appendix 1, Fig. 1 to view Baquaqua's Atlantic travel map.
[4] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 62.
[5] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 250.

relationships between the men behind Baquaqua's publication.[6] Though, they did pay more attention to Samuel Moore than George Pomeroy because Moore was more directly connected to the written narrative.

Moore was also an outspoken abolitionist, so his motives for assisting Baquaqua were fairly clear.[7] Moore's contributions to the written narrative were discussed by Law and Lovejoy in their assessment of the authenticity of the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*. Moore's Unitarian beliefs bled into Baquaqua's depiction of Africa and Islam. Law and Lovejoy did attribute some of the discrepancies surrounding Baquaqua's cultural context to linguistic barriers between Moore, who may have not spoken English as his first language, and Baquaqua, who knew several languages but was less experienced in English, which he only began to learn after his self-emancipation in New York in 1847. Historian Matthew Pursell noted that Law and Lovejoy, "convincingly argue[d] that the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua* was more Baquaqua's own work than was previously believed."[8] This essay holds that the publication is a valid narrative for Baquaqua's personal history, evidenced by the context leading to the pamphlet's publication and how that fits into Baquaqua's life story. Baquaqua never resided in Detroit and yet this was where his biography found a publisher. This important setting revealed the ways in which Detroit, even in the early nineteenth century, was an important juncture for the global circulation of people and ideas.

Law and Lovejoy suggested that Baquaqua published his narrative in Detroit because of his severed relationship with the Free Mission. However, there was not a clear distinction as to

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[6] Law and Lovejoy were more interested in providing validity to Baquaqua's narrative that chronicles his life up through his self-emancipation and eventual break from the Free Mission.
Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography,* 11-15.
[7] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography,* 8.
[8] Matthew Pursell, "The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America (review)," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (2003): 577.

why, specifically, Baquaqua chose the city.[9] Detroit, and the publication, were not discussed in Baquaqua's narrative. Law and Lovejoy assessed that Baquaqua likely paid both Moore and Pomeroy to participate in the process, and their relationship ended there.[10] This essay seeks to answer why Baquaqua may have chosen Detroit and how he came to cross paths with his associates. This essay is organized thematically, through religion, travel, and commerce, to identify how the combination of these forces created circumstances that connected these three men to Detroit in 1854.

Religion

Throughout his lifetime, Baquaqua experienced many forms of Christianity. However, Baquaqua's family was Muslim. His Islamic heritage was beneficial to him in several ways, including increasing the likelihood of publishing his narrative. Baquaqua was semi-literate in Arabic before his education from the Free Mission. He came from a well-connected family with economic relevance. Throughout his youth, Baquaqua was raised to become a professional like many of the men in his family that he described in the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*.

Baquaqua and Islam

Baquaqua and his brother were educated by their uncle, who was a scholar on the Qur'an.[11] Baquaqua's brother, who excelled at learning, later became a schoolmaster and was employed by the ruler of Djougou to perform the techniques of *'ilm al-raml* or geomancy.[12] Baquaqua studied under his brother though, he did not stay long at school. It is clear he did not master Arabic.[13] Baquaqua was unable to successfully write a common Arabic phrase in his

[9] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 15-16.
[10] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 250.
[11] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 27.
[12] Louis Brenner, "Book Review of African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 17, no. 4 (1984), 767.
[13] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 245.

adulthood.[14] Though he seemed well separated from his Islamic past, Baquaqua maintained his African name throughout his lifetime. His first name was a poor transliteration of Muhammad, an obvious reference to his Islamic heritage. His middle name was culturally symbolic to the Muslim community in Djougou. The name Gardo, or rather "Gado," indicated that he was the first child born after his mother had given birth to twins. Twins were considered more knowledgeable than other children. Baquaqua's twin siblings died in infancy; therefore, it was his responsibility to commemorate them appropriately.[15] Lovejoy was not able to identify the meaning of his last name.[16]

Baquaqua's father was a devout Muslim. In the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, the narrator said: " My father, (says Mahommah) rose every morning at four o'clock for prayers, after which he returned to bed, at sunrise he performed his second devotional exercises, at noon he worshipped again, and again at sunset."[17] On the other hand, Baquaqua considered his mother the antithesis. Baquaqua said: "my mother was like a good many Christians here, who like to be Christians in name, but do not like to worship God much. She liked Mahommedanism very well, but did not care much about the worshipping part of the matter."[18] Though he got many of the details right, the narrative was still riddled with anti-Muslim sentiments. Law and Lovejoy noted that it was common for women to play a less active role in the mosque. Baquaqua's words about his mother could have been reconstructed by Moore to make Islam appear more menacing to Christian readers. Baquaqua's white associates may have had some concept of Islam before they met Baquaqua. Captivity narratives from the Barbary Wars were popular at the turn of the

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[14] Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, "Letter to [George Whipple?]," 26 October 1853. Reprinted in Law and Lovejoy's introduction, 243-245.
[15] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 26.
[16] Paul E. Lovejoy, "Identity and the mirage of ethnicity," in *Africa Re-genesis: Confronting Social Issues in the Diaspora*, eds. Jay B. Haviser and Kevin C. MacDonald (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc., 2006), 96.
[17] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 9.
[18] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 26.

century, fueling fear and resentment towards Muslims. Detroit would not open a mosque until the 1920s.[19] Therefore, if Pomeroy or Moore did know anything about Islam, it was likely not substantial or reliable.

Baquaqua and the Free Mission

During his enslavement in Brazil, Baquaqua recalled being forced to participate in Catholic mass. He recounted, "we were taught to chant some words which we did not know the meaning of."[20] Baquaqua did not consider himself a Christian at this point though he was forced to convert to Catholicism. Upon his journey to Haiti, he befriended a Black man, "Mr. Jones," who was affiliated with the American Baptist Free Mission.[21] Mr. Jones "conversed with him (Baquaqua) considerably on his way out in regard to his ideas of God, of the soul, of heaven [sic]."[22] When they arrived in Haiti, Baquaqua began to work under another Black man, whom he said was cruel to him in the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*. After parting with the man, Baquaqua fought alcoholism and depression. He returned to the port, where he recalled his connection with Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones introduced Baquaqua to the Free Mission's leaders, Reverend and Mrs. Judd, of the operation at Port au Prince.[23] The American Baptist Free Mission

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[19] Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 21.
Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014), 50.

[20] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 45.

[21] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 47.
I have opted to utilize the term "Black" because all people of color were endangered and dehumanized by American slavery and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Baquaqua also does not differentiate (or Moore does not rather) between different "races" of people of color mentioned in the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua.* In the 1920s, W.E.B Du Bois requested that the New York Times capitalize the "N" in "Negro;" therefore I will follow suit and capitalize the term "Black" in this essay. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/insider/capitalized-black.html.

[22] Nancy A. L. Judd, "Letter to C. P. Grosvenor," *The Christian Contributor,* 17 May 1848. Reprinted in Law and Lovejoy's introduction, 217-226

[23] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 57-58.

developed out of the Free Will Baptist Movement, which itself broke from the Baptist church in 1843 over the issue of abolition.[24] Reverend and Mrs. Judd employed Baquaqua as their cook.

In less than a year of living with Reverend and Mrs. Judd, Reverend Judd claimed that Baquaqua asked to be baptized "for a considerable time" before Judd agreed to perform the ceremony.[25] Moreover, Mrs. Judd recounted that Baquaqua talked about his sin with her on his own accord, especially of his sin in Africa before he knew of what Mrs. Judd described as the "true God." Mrs. Judd then inquired about his love for God and presumed he has become a Christian on his own account.[26] Reverend Judd's recollection of Baquaqua's baptism, performed in English and French, was recorded in the form of a letter and then reprinted in Foss and Matthews' *Facts for Baptist Churches* (1850):

> His experience before the church was very affecting. Several persons, not professors of religion, wept on hearing it. He is endowed by nature with a soul so noble that he grasps the whole world at a stroke, in the movements of his benevolent feelings. And the expression of such noble feelings, in a style so simple and broken as his, is truly affecting. He now seems filled with the most ardent desire to labor for the salvation of souls: talks much of Africa, and prays ardently that his people may receive the gospel. Dreams often of visiting Kachna (Katsina – see fig 2).[27]

The reaction of his audience as he recounted his story likely influenced how Baquaqua's final narrative would take form. [28] Baquaqua would continue to be employed to tell his story for years on behalf of the Free Mission. After he traveled from Haiti to New York with Mrs. Judd, he lectured to raise money to send him to New York Central College. Baquaqua became a vivacious student of the Bible both at the direction of the Judds and during his time in college (Baquaqua's

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[24] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 49.
[25] A. T. Foss and Edward Matthews, *Facts for Baptist Churches* (Utica: American Baptist Free Mission Society, 1850), 393.
[26] Nancy A. L. Judd. "Letter to C. P. Grosvenor," *The Christian Contributor*, 17 May 1848. Reprinted in Law and Lovejoy's introduction, 217-226.
[27] Foss and Edwards, 393.
[28] Robin Law, "Individualising the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua of Djougou (1854)," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Volume 12 (London: Royal Historical Society, 2002): 131.

college experience will be discussed more in the final section). Baquaqua attributed this fervor to his excitement to share the Bible with his Islamic homeland, namely his mother and sister(s).[29]

Baquaqua's Experience with Other Reformed Christians

Baquaqua fell from contact with his former associates at New York Central College and associated Freetown Corners Free Baptist Church after he was accused of attempting to court a white girl. He wrote to politician Gerrit Smith in 1854, "I am very sorry to inform you that the free Mission has kill the African Mission. And kill Mahommah to [sic]." He also asked Smith for advice on purchasing a piece of land in Canada or New York with "nothing to begin with."[30] Gerrit Smith was a former Presbyterian who was widely connected with the Free Mission even though he was "nondenominational."[31] He must have provided Baquaqua with contacts and possibly funding to make his move from New York to Canada that year. In another letter from 1854, Baquaqua wrote to Gerrit Smith to request a loan of $200 to print the pamphlet.[32] This letter came after the first request for funds. Law and Lovejoy speculated that Smith may have linked Baquaqua with his Michigan associates, but provided little detail into their theory. It is more likely that Smith knew Pomeroy, as they were both New England businessmen during the same period and partially known as Presbyterians. Certainly, religion, and the changing scope of Christianity, were key players in the formation of networks from New England into the Midwest.

Samuel Downing Moore was a Unitarian minister.[33] The cover of Baquaqua's work credited Moore as the "late publisher of the 'North of England Shipping Gazette,' author of

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[29] Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, "Letter to Cyrus P. Grosvenor," *The Christian Contributor,* 19 November 1848. Reprinted in Law and Lovejoy's introduction, 245-235.
[30] Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, "Letter to Gerrit Smith," 25 May 1854. Reprinted in Law and Lovejoy's introduction, 247-249.
[31] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 14-15.
[32] Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, "Letter to Gerrit Smith," 4 July 1854. Reprinted in Law and Lovejoy's introduction, 249-250.
[33] Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1984), 590.

several popular works, and editor of the sundry reform papers," none of which have been tracked.[34] The year Baquaqua's narrative was published, Moore wrote a letter addressed to a "Friend Marius." The letter chronicled how the Friends of Michigan sent a memorial to the federal Senate and House against the Kansas-Nebraska Act.[35] Moore claimed in the letter that other nations know the U.S. as a "slaveholding, slave raising, and slave breeding nation," and by Moore's judgment, these foreign critiques would "not heed my admonition, but [be] sent on without correction."[36] Moore speculated that the Society of Friends only wrote the letter to the congressman to "put at rest the consciences of its members." He went on to describe how in earlier discussions, one of the members stated that the Society of Friends was not an abolition society. Moore then joked that if this congressman who received the memorial would want to speak at their meeting, it would be against the rules. To which Moore responded, "that measuring ourselves by ourselves, we are not wise," and signed the letter "Thine for the cause of the oppressed and down trodden, Samuel D. Moore."[37] It was clear that Moore was active in religious and abolitionist spaces that Baquaqua may have corresponded upon leaving New York. How Moore found himself in these discussions was not overtly stated in his own biography, addressed in the next section of this essay. Religion certainly constituted Moore's abolitionist mental state but his physical presence was less noted. Moore did not travel far from his home in Ypsilanti. There were no records located of Samuel Moore's financial dealings. Pomeroy, on the other hand, was well suited for travel, as he was comfortable financially.

[34] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, front cover.
[35] Samuel Moore, "Friends in Michigan," *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (New Libson, OH), 15 April 1854.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Travel

Of the three men, Baquaqua indeed traveled the furthest in terms of mileage. Additionally, Baquaqua's travels were more often involuntary and riddled with strife, which is not the experience of the white publishers who released Baquaqua's story. Baquaqua's travels were well documented in his narrative. Law and Lovejoy gave less detail to Pomeroy and Moore, who were connected to the abolitionist movement in Michigan. Pomeroy and Moore found themselves in Michigan through conventional exploration.

Travel within the United States

Samuel Moore's family traveled from Ireland to the United States during his childhood; it is unclear how old Moore was when his family moved.[38] Moore married in Pennsylvania.[39] After his marriage, he moved to Michigan and settled in Ypsilanti in Washtenaw county.[40] Washtenaw county became a "hub" for people opposed to slavery; members of local churches together formed an anti-slavery society in 1836.[41] Moore was working with the Society of Friends in Michigan to urge Senators to vote against the Kansas-Nebraska act in 1854 when the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua* was published.[42] His autobiography lacked a multitude of abolitionist sentiment. No publication had much speculation on why Moore's autobiography was seemingly hesitant. Samuel Moore was not the primary interest of scholars studying this biography; he was a vocal abolitionist, and it can be deciphered that this influenced his communication with Baquaqua and ultimately shaped the publication. On the other hand,

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[38] Unable to confirm the date of Samuel Moore's move due to COVID-19 library closure, I assume the date is recorded in his autobiography housed at the Detroit Library's Burton Historical Collection.
[39] Samuel Downing Moore, *Human Life; illustrated in my individual experience as a child, a youth and a man* (Adrian, Michigan: Times and Expositor print, 1887).
[40] Ibid.
[41] Carole E. Mull, *The Underground Railroad in Michigan* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010), 2.
[42] Moore, "Friends in Michigan."

publisher George E. Pomeroy's abolitionist sentiments, if he truly had any, were kept fairly quiet. He left behind records of his business ventures spanning across New York, Ohio, and Michigan and recorded impressions from people who knew him or knew of his reputation.

George Pomeroy also did not travel nearly the distance that Baquaqua had. Pomeroy was born in New York and kept his travel local. He was married in 1830 in Palmyra, New York and in 1835, Pomeroy and his wife resettled in Palmyra, Lenawee county, Michigan where Mr. Pomeroy was "engaged in milling and was the proprietor of a hotel," the name of which goes unrecorded.[43] In 1835, there was a movement of Presbyterians from New York who resettled in Lenawee County, Michigan as Underground Railroad conductors.[44] A decade before the Pomeroys moved, residents from Palmyra, New York, settled in Wayne County, Michigan, to establish an Abolitionist church. The same year the Pomeroys moved to Michigan, James B. Wells of Ontario County, New York (just a few miles south of Palmyra) began to develop Clinton, Lenawee County, Michigan. Before Wells, Clinton was mainly uncleared forest. He carved out six hundred acres for his property that doubled as his home and a covert stop on the Underground Railroad.[45] Theodore Weld, a born-again Presbyterian, used antislavery rhetoric and lecturers to create an abolitionist network in the early 1830s that spanned from upstate New York through Ohio and into Michigan.[46] In the 1830s, the Railroad, ran through Indiana and avoided the Democratic regions in Ohio and Monroe County, Michigan.[47] Therefore, the

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[43] Harvey Scribner, *Memoirs of Lucas County and the City of Toledo: from the earliest historical times down to the present, including a genealogical and biographical record of representative families* (Madison, WI: Western Historical Association, 1910), 51.
Albert Pomeroy, *The History and Genealogy of the Pomeroy Family* (Detroit: Geo. A. Drake & Co., 1922), 454.
There were not any recorded hotels or mills in the area or properties listed under the name "Pomeroy" in the 1837 Detroit City Directory.
[44] Mull, 126
[45] Mull, 93.
[46] Mull, 36-39.
[47] Mull, 99.

Pomeroys', who resided in the center of Lenawee county, would have been in the midst of the Underground Railroad.[48] However, after only a few years in Michigan, Pomeroy and his family returned to New York; citing his own "ill-health."[49]

Pomeroy almost immediately established an express business in Albany, New York. The successful business surely had quite a return; the company would go on to become Wells Fargo. Nevertheless, he sold off his share to his brother in 1844 to return to Michigan.[50] He settled in Clinton, the territory that James B. Wells had settled less than a decade earlier.[51] From 1844 to 1865, Pomeroy remained in Michigan publishing the *Detroit Tribune*. Ultimately, Pomeroy settled in Toledo, Ohio in the year 1865, where he had been engaged in the real estate business for several years before his move.[52] More details about Pomeroy's business dealings will be discussed in the final section of this essay. Pomeroy did not leave behind letters or writings of his own. An article about Pomeroy's eldest son, George Eltweed Pomeroy Jr., in *The Successful American,* stated that "he ha[d] an unusually large acquaintance with prominent men, reaching from San Francisco to London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, and from New York to Philadelphia, Boston, Halifax, Montreal and Prince Edward's Island." [53] The author went on to write, "generosity and hospitality have been among the main virtues of the Pomeroys for generations."[54]

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[48] "Freedom seekers" is the term employed by scholars to refer to people escaping slavery. The person who had attempted to escape was considered "self-emancipated."
[49] Alexander Stinson, *Express Office Handbook and Directory, for the use of 1,200 Express Agents and their Customers, being the History of then Express Business and the earlier railroad enterprises in the united states* (New York: 1860).
[50] Ruth Teiser and Catherine Harroun, "Origin of Wells, Fargo, and Company, 1841-1852," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 22, no. 3 (1948): 108.
[51] Pomeroy, 454.
[52] *Railway Age and Railway Review*, Volume 18 (New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1886), 44.
[53] The Successful American, Volume 5 (Press Biographical Company, 1902), 648.
[54] The Successful American, Volume 5 (Press Biographical Company, 1902), 648.

In the sixth volume of the *Report of the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan* published in 1884, there is a short narrative about the *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*.[55] The narrative stated:

> In 1853 it (*The Tribune*) passed into the hands of George E. Pomeroy & Co., with Joseph Warren as editor, and under this management rendered most important and invaluable service in bringing the Whig party into affiliation with the anti-slavery Democrats, which resulted in the formation of the Republican party in 1854, and broke the long hold of Democratic party on power in this State.[56]

It was likely not Mr. Pomeroy's intention to assist in the foundation of the Republican party, considering he ran for office in the early 1850s as a Whig.[57] Pomeroy's world, unlike Baquaqua's, was centered in Michigan. Pomeroy, as already demonstrated, was far from the only New Yorker to settle in Michigan. After the war of 1812, many families from New York and New England began to migrate to the Northwest Territory in search of land to settle. The Northwest Ordinance (1787) outlawed slavery in the Territory and remained law in 1837 when Michigan became a state.[58] Even though slavery was illegal, it persisted throughout Michigan.[59]

Michigan

In addition to legal workarounds that kept Black people enslaved in Michigan, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 allowed slaveholders the right to legally capture freedom seekers. Not only were the slaveholders' rights expanded by the Act, at the cost of Black lives, but the expectation was that local governments were to actively participate and assist the slaveholders. It

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[55] It was known by several variations of the name *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune.* Under Mr. Pomeroy, it was published as the *Detroit Tribune.*

[56] The Pioneer Society of Michigan, *Report of the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan* (Lansing: W.S. George & Co., State Printers & Binders, 1884), 63.

[57] The Whig Party was not necessarily anti-slavery. The party was founded in 1834 as a union against President Andrew Jackson and the Democrats, who the Whigs felt were behaving kingly. The Whig party collapsed in the mid-1850s over the issue of slavery. The anti-slavery sect of the Whig party founded the Republican party in 1854. "Whig State Ticket," *The Hillsdale Standard* (Hillsdale, MI), 13, 20, 27 July 1852 and 26 October 1852.

[58] Mull, 10.

[59] See Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: a chronicle of slavery and freedom in the city of the straits* (New York: The New Press, 2017) for more information about slavery in Detroit.

also penalized people who aided freedom seekers. At the turn of the nineteenth century, many people escaping slavery attempted to cross the Detroit River to Canada.[60] As Carol Mull explained, "where slavery existed, there were enslaved people who resisted it."[61] At first, the obscurity and hostility between English-owned Canada and the newly independent America was the only cover freedom seekers had from their enslavers. However, in 1807, the Michigan Supreme Court made two consecutive rulings regarding slavery in the Territory. Justice Augustus B. Woodward ruled in *Denison v. Tucker* (1807) that Michigan would establish procedures to define how slaves would be returned or not returned. Justice Woodward outlined specific rulings that would strengthen Michigan's ban on slavery, and completely phase it out of the state, though it did not apply to the escaped Denisons in this case. Woodward's opening words about the case were, "The Slave trade is unquestionably the greatest of the enormities which have been perpetrated by the human race. The existence at this day of an absolute & unqualified Slavery of the human species in the United States of America is universally and justly considered their greatest and deepest reproach."[62]

A month after the Denison case, Richard Pattinson came before Justice Woodward to petition the return of freedom seekers, Jane and Joseph. Pattinson was a resident of Sandwich, Ontario, Canada, who claimed his slaves had escaped to Detroit. Woodward rejected the petition and noted that "safe harbors must exist"[63] He went on to say, "A human being escaping from chains and tyranny could find no place in the whole earth to rest. Go where he would the power and the arm of the tyrant would still reach him. Man, the monarch of the earth, would be able to

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[60] Miles, 185.
[61] Mull, 9.
[62] Edward Littlejohn, "Slaves, Judge Woodward, and the Supreme Court of the Michigan Territory," *Michigan Bar Journal*, Michigan Bar Association, July 2015, http://www.michbar.org/file/barjournal/article/documents/pdf4article2649.pdf, 23.
[63] Littlejohn, 24.

find no place upon its surface where he could breathe the air of freedom."[64] In retaliation, Canada issued a similar decision, and thus the Underground Railroad through Michigan was solidified from legal pettiness on either side.

Anti-slavery institutions resettled free Blacks in the early nineteenth century to Michigan in order to train them to return to Africa as missionaries. However, much of the transported population settled throughout Michigan operating among the Underground Railroads and in Black Vigilance Committees.[65] In Michigan, these committees sought to prevent the arrest of fugitives, provide financial and legal aid, and fight crime.[66] Carol Mull depicted the scene in Michigan and across the nation: "As expected, few records remain. However, there is verifiable evidence that secret societies, in addition to Vigilance Committees, did exist, and in the decade proceeding the Civil War, members contributed to escapes on the Underground Railroad and plotted to overthrow slavery."[67] Mull cited evidence for such a society in Detroit from the records of William Lambert, George DeBaptiste, and Booker T. Washington. A Vigilance group in New York provided Baquaqua with aid during his self-emancipation, ultimately resorting to "breaking" him out of the jail.[68] Vigilance groups often were forced to act outside of the law. However, in 1833, Britain outlawed slavery in all its territories, including Canada.[69] After 1833, Detroit grew as an abolitionist hot spot because of its proximity to Canada. Jacob Merrit Howard, a member of the 1832 Michigan House of Representatives, simultaneously served as an

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[64] Littlejohn, 24.
[65] Mull, 120.
[66] Mull, 84.
[67] Mull, 88.
[68] The details that Baquaqua recalled about the night he escaped from the jail made it appear as though this organization was operating with assistance from law enforcement.
[69] Miles, 229.

Underground Railroad conductor in Detroit.[70] Southern outrage to the abolitionist workings of the north pressured the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act.

The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act forced citizens to actively participate in the capture of freedom seekers, ended freedom seekers' right to trial by jury, and increased penalties on individuals attempting to help freedom seekers.[71] Michiganders from different backgrounds no longer sought to support a "purely Southern" institution and were activated by the passage of the Slave Act of 1850.[72] Michiganders, and other Northerners, felt they should not be required to assist in the capture of freedom seekers. Thus, the Underground Railroad grew exponentially throughout the 1850s.[73] The path to Detroit became more direct, through Toledo, to help freedom seekers reach Canada quicker.[74] The Detroit Historical Society estimated that at least 45,000 people escaped slavery by passing through Detroit into Canada.[75] The population of Michigan continued to grow, doubling in the 1850s.[76] Many of the families that settled in southeastern Michigan were from New England and New York where racial tolerance was more common. Additionally, poor immigrants from Europe made up another large portion of the population of southeastern Michigan. The community leaned in support of abolition, perhaps because slavery inherently lowers labor prices and wages for all working-class people. However, this support was far different from action.[77] Most participants of the Underground Railroad in Michigan had emotional stock in the abolitionist movement; such as victims of slavery, religious zealots, and

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[70] Mull, 20
[71] Mull, 123.
[72] Mull, 123
[73] Mull, 153.
[74] Mull, 126. Recall that at some time during the early 1850s George Pomeroy became involved with the real estate business in Toledo.
[75] "Underground Railroad," Encyclopedia of Detroit, Detroit Historical Society, Accessed 24 April 2020, https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/underground-railroad.
[76] Mull, 158.
[77] Mull, 10.

those formerly employed within the slave trade. So, while it appeared that the culture of Detroit would have been welcoming for Baquaqua and his associates to work on their collaboration, that was not the reality in Michigan**.** Carol Mull provided plenty of evidence to support that the consensus toward racial equality was far from concretely Republican.[78]

Moreover, Baquaqua never lived in Detroit. He resided in Chatham during the time of publication (in Southwestern Ontario, Canada, today modern Chatham-Kent County) where there was a settlement of Blacks who owned property. He only stayed there a few years before moving to England in 1855.[79] If Baquaqua was able to return to Africa, as he hoped, he would have completed each leg of the triangle-trade. Before Baquaqua arrived in Detroit he saw a significant amount of the world.

Baquaqua and Long-Distance Travel

Baquaqua identified himself to Moore by saying he was from "Zoogoo" which Law and Lovejoy identified as Djougou (northern portion of the Republique of Bénin).[80] Djougou was a nexus between the Sokoto Caliphate to the east and the Asante Kingdom to the west.[81] Baquaqua's brother traveled extensively as a trader and allowed Baquaqua to accompany him on at least one long-distance trade journey west to Daboya (modern Ghana).[82] Neither of Baquaqua's parents originated from Djougou. Baquaqua's father was from Nikki, a larger city to the east of Djougou.[83] His mother was from Katsina to the north.[84] Baquaqua did not provide any information about when his families may have migrated to Djougou. The community that

[78] See Mull, 99-103.
[79] See fig. 1.
[80] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 18.
[81] See Fig. 2. for geography of mid-nineteenth century north-west Africa.
[82] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 23.
[83] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 23.
[84] Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Urban Background of Enslaved Muslims in the Americas," *Slavery and Abolition* 26, no. 3 (2005): 361.

Baquaqua would have grown up among was a multilingual and multiethnic one; Baquaqua was part of a cultural minority in Djougou. The ruling family of Djougou was neither Muslim nor spoke Baquaqua's native Dendi.[85] Baquaqua himself likely spoke several local languages and was familiar with written Arabic from his training in Qur'anic school. In his youth, Baquaqua explained that he did "not progress very well in learning, having a natural dread of it" and that caused him to find interest elsewhere.[86] Upon his truancy in school, he was once captured as a prisoner of war and ransomed by his brother.[87] Shortly after his ransom, he took up service for the palace king, who was "related to [his] mother."[88] By his own account, he abused his new position as a *tkiriku* in the palace, participating in less than satisfactory behavior, and was tricked into extreme drunkenness one day. When he awoke, he was bound in slavery.[89] He was moved from Djougou to the coastal city of Ouidah where he was boarded to a ship bound for the west.[90] By the late eighteenth century, the Borgu region (where Djougou was located) was a minor supplier of slaves to the trans-Atlantic trade.[91] Slaves were more often taken from Borgu for trade in the internal market of west Africa and sent far east, ending on the opposite side of the Sahara.[92] Nevertheless, Baquaqua found himself being forced much further from his home than across the desert.

African historian, Martin Klein, explained that west Africans "were very able and resourceful persons who quickly learned European languages, adapted to alien cultures, managed

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[85] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 98.
[86] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 27.
[87] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 27.
[88] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 31.
[89] See more about alcohol and slavery in José C. Curto, *Enslaving Spirits: the Portuguese-Brazilian alcohol trade at Luanda and its Hinterland, c. 1550-1830* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004).
[90] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 35.
[91] Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy, "Borgu in the Atlantic Slave Trade," *African Economic History* no. 27 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 69.
[92] Law and Lovejoy, "Borgu in the Atlantic Slave Trade," 69.

to free themselves, and either wrote or found someone to write their story."[93] Baquaqua was no exception to Klein's observation. Baquaqua was able to learn some Portuguese from his captors during the Middle Passage and in Brazil. He first landed in Pernambuco (Recife, Brazil) where he was sold to a baker that was exceptionally cruel to him. However, Baquaqua was able to practice his Portuguese working the baker's stall in the market. After several attempts at escape, the baker sold Baquaqua off. Baquaqua exchanged hands several times, ending in Rio.[94] In Rio, he was sold to Clemente José da Costa, the captain of the *Lembrança*. Da Costa renamed Baquaqua "José da Costa," and he joined the crew's other slaves, José da Roche and Maria da Costa. The crew departed for New York after a short time sailing around ports in Brazil.[95] On 27 June 1847, the *Lembrança* arrived in New York, and a tug of war for freedom ensued. A man that Baquaqua only described as an "Englishman" aboard the ship, perhaps a paying traveler or a crew member, encouraged Baquaqua and the other two slaves to envision possible freedom in New York. He explained, presumably in Portuguese, that slavery was diminishing in many places around the world, including New York where the crew planned to land.[96] In New York, Baquaqua would self-emancipate from da Costa and step into a new enterprising outlook. More will be said about Baquaqua's emancipation and following affairs in the final section of this essay. Baquaqua, after his escape had been assured by the Vigilance Society, was given the choice to travel to Britain or Haiti. Baquaqua chose Haiti because he thought it would be a more similar climate to his home.[97] In Haiti, Baquaqua would relinquish his Islamic faith to accept the religion of the Free Baptist Mission of Port-au-Prince.

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[93] Martin Klein, "Understanding the Slave Experience in West Africa," in *Biography and the Black Atlantic*, edited by Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 45.
[94] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 47.
[95] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 54.
[96] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 44.
[97] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 56.

Entrepreneurship

Baquaqua's American journey started at a significant disadvantage compared to his white counterparts. One of Baquaqua's greatest feats was his ability to emancipate himself in New York. He then orchestrated the publication of *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua.* George Pomeroy published the pamphlet. The purpose of Pomeroy's involvement was not clear. It was noted earlier that Pomeroy did not leave behind records of his personal virtues. He did, however, leave records of his business associations in short biographies. Pomeroy's first move to Michigan was unsustainable; his biography cited his own "ill-health." He returned to New York in 1840. Hardly taking a second of rest, he promptly began working with the rail service. After perceiving a need for an express service out of Albany, he ambitiously jumped at the opportunity.

The Geo E. Pomeroy & Co.

Upon Pomeroy's return to New York, he took up work as a Western Freight and Passenger Forwarder in Albany.[98] He noticed quickly how there were few express services in New England around this time. They were mainly moving mail from Albany to New York, Boston, and Providence. George Pomeroy contacted James Hale, which Hale recounted in a newspaper article, to inquire about the feasibility of running an Albany express by riverboat. Even though Hale advised against the plan, Pomeroy opened Pomeroy & Co. in 1841.[99] By June of 1841, Pomeroy's Express was making weekly trips to Batavia and Buffalo in eighty-five-hour round trips by railway. The parcels were carried in carpet bags and small trunks. By the next year, Mr. Pomeroy devised the use of the first postage stamp in the United States. Within the decade, the route was extended to New York City and competed with other existing routes.

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[98] Stinson.
[99] James Hale, "The Express Business," *The True Northerner* (Paw Paw, MI), 25 August 1871.

Lawsuits by the government for alleged violations of postal laws pounded Pomeroy's Express Service; however, decisions ended favorably towards the company.[100]

Pomeroy incorporated his brother, Thaddeus Pomeroy, as a junior partner, with Henry Wells, and Crawford Livingston, and joined the business under Pomeroy & Company. In a personal letter written by Henry Wells, Pomeroy's employee, successor, and future partner of Wells Fargo, he noted they would transport almost anything they could carry that someone was willing to pay to move - including live lobsters.[101] Banks trusted the business to transport large sums of money, hesitantly at first, but then frequently.[102] By July 1844, Pomeroy's Daily Letter Express expanded to Toledo. The *Toledo Blade* reported: "New Post Office, Post Reduced. Pomeroy's Daily Letter Express, having been extended to this place, is now prepared to carry letters at the following rates: From Toledo to Detroit and all lake points, Buffalo included." The ad then stated, "the rates offered were below those of the United States postal service."[103] In 1844, as the business was expanding to new territories, Pomeroy sold his share to his brother, Thaddeus, and set out for Michigan again. During his time with the express service, he was noted to be a responsible deliverer to all his clients. Pomeroy delivered mail of many affiliates even though he was "one of the rankest Whigs."[104]

When he returned to Michigan and settled in Clinton, Lenawee County, Mr. Pomeroy invested in a printing business. He founded the *Detroit Tribune* in 1849 that was printed daily.[105] In Detroit's city directories, George Pomeroy took out ads for the *Tribune* in 1852, 1853, 1854,

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[100] Hale, "The Express Business."
[101] Teiser and Harroun, 70-83.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Pomeroy, 454.
[104] Teiser and Harroun, 108.
[105] Pomeroy, 454 and "News: West and Northwest," *The Lake County Star* (Chase, MI), 21 January 1886. The *Detroit Tribune* is accessible in its original form at the American Antiquarian Society, the Office of the Commonwealth Library Bureau of the State of Pennsylvania, and the Boston Public Library.

and 1855. In 1852, Pomeroy's company was "determined to make their establishment second to no other west of New York…[by] respectfully solicit[ing] public patronage."[106] Perhaps Baquaqua found Pomeroy through his ads for the public. In 1854, the company confirmed it could print books and pamphlets in their ad noting that the work was "done on new type, good paper, and steam presses, and by skillful and experienced Workmen."[107] By 1856, Pomeroy's partner Henry Barns purchased the company. Barns ran his own printing business from Pomeroy's old property.[108]

There are few identifiable remaining records of the George E Pomeroy & Co. publishing company. Besides Baquaqua's narrative, Pomeroy's company also published at least three other documents. The *Michigan Journal of Education and Teachers' Magazine* used Pomeroy's company to print their annual magazine in the years 1854, 1855, and 1856.[109] Pomeroy also published the *Arguments, pro and con, on the call for a National Emigration Convention to be held in Cleveland, Ohio,* written by Fredrick Douglass, W.J. Watkins, and J.M. Whitfield, whom Baquaqua quoted in his narrative.[110] Besides these two rather niche publications, the Pomeroy company published *A Narrative of the Life and Experience of Francois Pepin* (1854). Francois Pepin's narrative documented his fall from Catholicism after forty years in the clergy to turn to the "pure religion of the Bible," some form of Protestantism, presumably. *Francois Pepin* sold three hundred thousand copies in its first twenty-five years in print.[111] *Francois Pepin* was able to achieve acclaim from the same publisher that did not sell many copies of Baquaqua's

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[106] Shove, *Business Advertiser and Detroit Directory for 1852-1853* (Detroit: Free Press Book and Job Office Print, 1852), 93.
[107] J.D. Johnston, *Detroit City Directory and Business Advertiser for 1853-1854*, Inside Cover.
[108] J.D. Johnston, *Detroit City Directory and Advertising Gazetteer of Michigan for 1855-1856*, 377.
[109] *The Lake County Star*.
[110] Fredrick Douglass, W.J. Watkins, and J.M. Whitfield. *Arguments, pro and con, on the call for a National Emigration Convention to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, August 1854* (Detroit: M.T. Newsroom, 1854).
[111] Kathryn Gin Lum, *Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 77.

narrative. Law and Lovejoy did not discuss *Francois Pepin* or publication statistics. Francois Pepin was a community member of Detroit. His autobiography may have sold many more copies because he knew many more consumers.

George E. Pomeroy was nominated as the Whig candidate for Michigan Secretary of State in 1852. [112] Pomeroy received three hundred sixty-five of the one thousand one hundred and eighty votes cast for Secretary of State in 1852.[113] In the later 1850s, Pomeroy was engaged with the real estate business in Toledo, Ohio, where he ultimately settled in 1865.[114] George Eltweed Pomeroy Sr. passed away on 12 Jan 1886.[115] Pomeroy's obituary appeared in *The Lake County Star*, a Republican paper, published in Lake County in Western Michigan. While Pomeroy was never labeled an abolitionist, the *Memoirs of Lucas County & the City of Toledo* had no hesitation in naming his son, George Eltweed Pomeroy Jr., as one.[116] If Pomeroy did influence the publication of Baquaqua's narrative it certainly did not appear to have a positive impact. The story never gained the traction of Pomeroy's other work.

Author, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua

Baquaqua was an affluent, networked young person before he was forced from Africa. His family was descended from the town of Katsina to the north, which dominated trade in the region between the Sokoto Caliphate and the Asante Kingdom.[117] His family likely owned property in Djougou, Nikki, Katsina, and Salaga.[118] Baquaqua was likely more educated and well-traveled than many of his associates. Though he would not return to school until 1849, Baquaqua gained

[112] "Whig State Ticket," *The Hillsdale Standard* (Hillsdale, MI), 13, 20, 27 July 1852 and 26 October 1852.
[113] "County Canvasser's Statement of Votes Given in the County of Ottawa, and State of Michigan, at the General Election," *Grand River Times* (Grand Haven, MI), 24 November 1852.
[114] *Railway Age and Railway Review*, Volume 18 (New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1886), 44.
[115] Pomeroy, 454.
[116] Scribner, 51.
[117] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 26.
[118] Lovejoy, "The Urban Background of Enslaved Muslims in the Americas," 361.

many skills during his enslavement in the 1840s. First, Baquaqua established his position at the baker's market stall in Pernambuco where he practiced his Portuguese. He then was enslaved by the captain of a ship where he was able to acquire skills at sea. From the ship, he learned of a possible route to escape bondage. A man aboard the ship taught Baquaqua and the others being held captive the English word "free." Baquaqua often described that he longed to return home to Africa where he could be truly free. Baquaqua first envisioned the possibility of repatriation when he was emancipated in New York.

Upon their arrival in New York, "a great many colored-persons came aboard the vessel to inquire whether we were free." Baquaqua described the nervousness of the Captain and his partner who warned them to not mention their enslavement.[119] Baquaqua and his companions wanted to defy da Costa's command and confide their condition to the men who inquired but da Costa sent them away early. Baquaqua was persistent for several days to escape the ship and alert the authorities of their condition. After several failed attempts, officials showed up to the *Lembrança* and requested da Costa proclaim everyone on the ship was free. Da Costa refused and they were all escorted to New York City Hall for trial. Baquaqua's freedom story was then followed by people in New York and Rio in several newspapers.[120] Judge Charles P. Daly ultimately ruled that the slaves had to be returned to the ship as part of its crew, as it was required under the terms of law agreed upon between the U.S. and Brazil.[121] Baquaqua and da Roche filed for an appeal in which another judge was likely to rule the same as the first. In the night, free Blacks entered the jail where Baquaqua and José da Roche were being held.[122] The guard, who claimed to have fallen asleep, left the keys on the desk, which allowed Baquaqua and

[119] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 54.
[120] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 174-175.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Unfortunately, Maria da Costa chose to go back to the ship willingly before the first ruling.

da Roche to escape. These free Blacks that assisted the men were likely members of the New York Vigilance Society, whose primary operation was defending Blacks in court.[123] The Society offered Baquaqua transit to either Haiti or Britain after his jailbreak. Baquaqua opted for Haiti.[124] Four weeks after their escape from New York, Baquaqua and his freed companion traveled to Haiti, where slavery had been abolished in the eighteenth century.[125]

On behalf of the Free Mission, Baquaqua was contracted to share his story since his conversion in 1848. The Free Mission exploited Baquaqua's narrative in Haiti, New England, and beyond, yet failed to fund its final publication. While working on fundraising for the African Mission, he was said to have told his story and "made several attempts to give a sketch of the manners, customs, &c. of his native country and of his being kidnapped and sold into slavery."[126] Law and Lovejoy discussed the evolution of Baquaqua's storytelling at length throughout their analysis. The result became the final pamphlet, to which Moore said: "if he [Baquaqua] is permitted to return to this country, to issue this work in a larger form, with the addition of matters that has either been entirely left out or curtailed for want of space."[127] Baquaqua was never afforded that opportunity.

In 1849, Baquaqua accompanied Mrs. Judd and her sister, whose health was failing, to New York. Baquaqua and Mrs. Judd spent several months traveling throughout New England asking for donations for Baquaqua's education at the newly founded New York Central College.[128] Founded in 1848 by the American Baptist Free Mission, New York Central College admitted both Blacks and women. While Baquaqua attended the college, there were three Black

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[123] Austin, 589.
[124] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 56-57.
[125] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 45.
[126] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 13.
[127] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 8.
[128] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 53.

professors.[129] Baquaqua began his tenure in 1849 and remained at the school until 1853. During that time, he continued working with the Baptist Free Mission Society orating his narrative across New England and soliciting donations as a member of the American Baptist Free Mission's Committee on the African Mission.[130] In the same meeting notes from the Free Mission, Baquaqua was appointed to raise funds for the African Mission in Pennsylvania and New York, and the Mission reported it failed to secure an African missionary.[131] It was around that time when Baquaqua decided to abandon the Free Mission in search of another route to Africa.

Baquaqua attempted to join the American Missionary Association to serve in its mission in Sierra Leone. The mission was not interested in Baquaqua's application because he lacked the linguistic skills they required.[132] After Baquaqua was accused of wanting to marry a white girl, a daughter of an abolitionist minister, nonetheless, he fled the threatened violence and left New York Central College and the affiliated Freetown Corners Free Baptist Church.[133] In 1854, he emigrated to Canada. In Chatham, there was an all-Black land-owning society that was founded by Reverend William King, a Presbyterian minister, and former slave owner. The American Baptist Free Mission also worked in the area.[134] He remained in Chatham while he organized the publication of the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua.*

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[129] Allan, 588.
[130] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 67.
[131] Law, "Individualising the Atlantic Slave Trade," 128.
[132] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 69.
[133] Law, "Individualising the Atlantic Slave Trade," 129 and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Black Atlantic in the Construction of the Western World: Alternative Approaches to the Europeanization of the Americas," in T*he Historical Practice of Diversity: Transcultural Interactions from the Early Modern Mediterranean to the Postcolonial World*, eds. Dirk Hoerder, Christine Harzig, and Adrian Shubert (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 116.
[134] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 63.

The Reputation of the Pamphlet

Baquaqua noted that he paid an "Englishman" to write the biography even though it can be extrapolated that Moore was more than willing.[135] In his "Preface and Compilers notes" Samuel Moore explained that he was formally writing down Baquaqua's narrative only "in consequence of the imperfect English spoken by Mahommah."[136] The Mission published a review in 1854, but it did not mention funding the project in the minutes from 1853-1855.[137] The Free Mission did not publicly defend or decry Baquaqua's pamphlet. According to Law and Lovejoy's work, there exist only eight copies of Baquaqua's narrative.[138] Law and Lovejoy found this surprising because, "[Baquaqua] was a minority within every community in which we know him to have lived: a Muslim in Djougou, a captive from the Bight of Benin in Recife and Rio, and a Brazilian escapee in New York."[139] It was noted previously that Baquaqua was part of the ethnic minority in Djougou, and that slaves were not often taken from Djougou across the Atlantic. While Brazil had a large enslaved population, it was uncommon for a Brazilian slave to end up thousands of miles away in New York as an emancipated person.

Furthermore, Baquaqua's account of his life as an enslaved person should have been a compelling biography to read in the 1850s Midwest. Its apparent lack of repute provided critics an argument otherwise. Baquaqua's pamphlet does not appear to have been well circulated at the time of publication.[140] The *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua* appeared in a small wave of

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[135] Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, "Letter to Gerrit Smith," 4 July 1854.
[136] Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*, 5.
[137] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 71.
[138] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 77.
[139] Patrick Manning, "Reviewed Work(s): The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America by Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy*," International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 2/3 (2002): 616.
[140] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, 71.

similar narratives that were also affiliated with white abolitionists.[141] The market was not strapped for slave narratives; Fredrick Douglass' narrative was published less than a decade earlier. Historian Allan Austin offered some explanation as to why Baquaqua's narrative was not as widely read: "Historical narratives by Muslim and African-born slaves never achieved the popularity of narratives by non-Muslims and American-born slaves."[142] He does not extrapolate on this statement.

Nearly one hundred and fifty years after the *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua*'s initial publication, Atlantic historians Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy republished the work with an extensive introduction and annotations. Before Law and Lovejoy's republication, Baquaqua's narrative was found in a few collections of slave narratives. In 1967, Philip Curtin published all known slave route narratives in his book *Africa Remembered.*[143] Robert Harms, a historian of Africa, who reviewed Law and Lovejoy's work, stated that five narratives were not included in Curtin's collection that were housed at the University of North Carolina's Library, including Baquaqua's.[144] However, in 1983, Robert Edgar Conrad published a work titled *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* that included details about Baquaqua's experience in Brazil.[145] The following year, Allan Austin published a collection of primary sources, *African Muslims in Antebellum America,* that contained the full narrative of Baquaqua as well as the published article about his conversion from the *Christian Contributor.* Nevertheless, Baquaqua's narrative did not gain as much attention as others in the genre.

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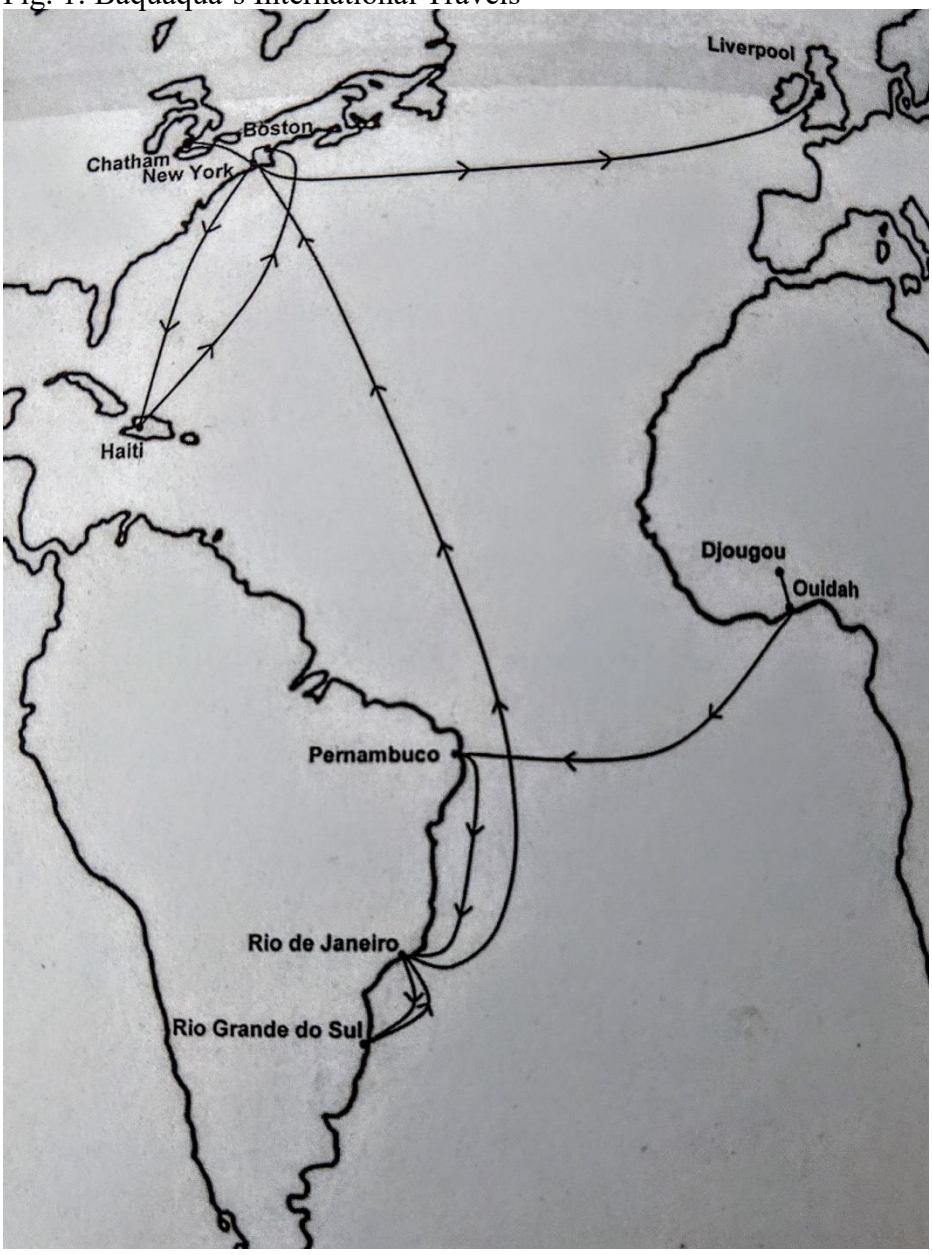
[141] See Olaudah Equiano (1789) and surrounding literature for discussion on the influence of white abolitionists on recorded narratives of former slaves.
[142] Austin, 23.
[143] Philip D Curtin, *Africa Remembered; narratives by West Africans from the era of the slave trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967).
[144] Robert Harms, "Robin Law and Paul Lovejoy, eds. The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America," *African Studies Review* 50, no. 2 (2007): 229.
[145] Robert Edgar Conrad, *Children of God's fire: a documentary history of black slavery in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1983).

Baquaqua was the sole author of his narrative, legally. However, the literary makeup of the narrative was likely changed by the contributions of many. The religious, explorative, and economic forces acting upon these associates drove them all to Detroit. The Free Mission's flaky response to Baquaqua's aspirations and his own experience traveling and carving out opportunities prepared him to make connections in new places. In Detroit, Baquaqua was able to find a suitable printer and editor to publish his narrative. While their transaction history has not been identified, they likely were each paid by Baquaqua. Baquaqua, in turn, raised the funds to accomplish the job then locate the men to perform the work and then complete the publication. Even if their relationship was only superficial, the editor and publisher had opportunity to alter the final narrative and change Baquaqua's written legacy. While certainly Baquaqua would have hoped to write his biography on his own terms, his resources were limited. Financially, Baquaqua could not pursue enterprise in the ways white men could. Linguistically, Baquaqua was not able to finish his education at New York Central College due to scandal. And emotionally, Baquaqua had been away from his home for nearly two decades. His desperation to return to his family was evident in his letters. He likely could not stay any longer in these foreign lands and thus he created a suitable legacy and continued his mission for repatriation. As Robin Law stated, "it would be agreeable to think that he did in the end succeed in getting back to Africa; but there is no evidence that he did so."[146]

[146] Law, "Individualising the Slave Trade," 129.

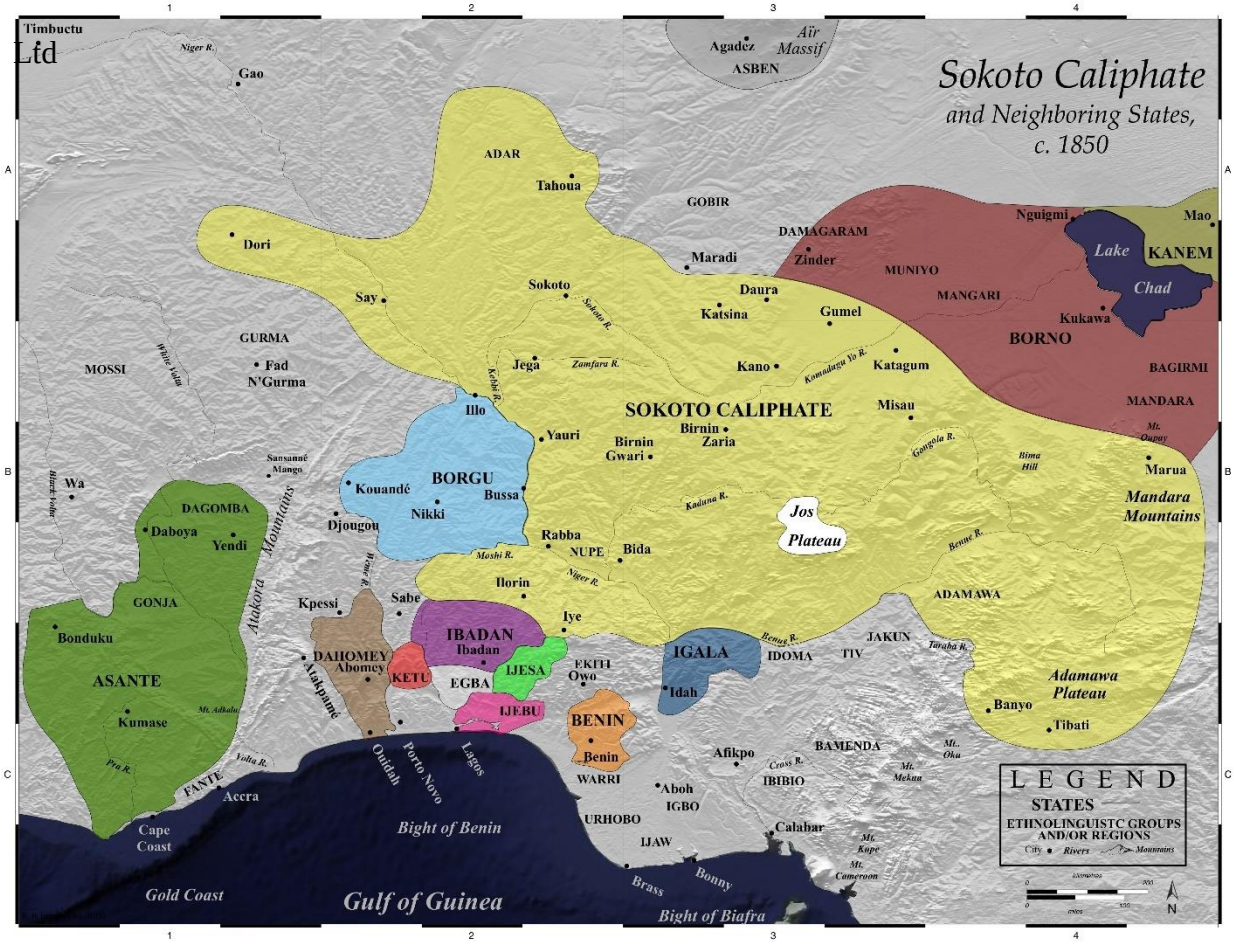
Appendix 1: Maps

Fig. 1: Baquaqua's International Travels[147]



[147] Law and Lovejoy, *The Biography*, xvi.

Fig. 2: West African civilizations in 1850 Courtesy of Henry B. Lovejoy, African Diaspora Maps



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